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January 15, 2023

From the Conference Minister

"There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?" (John 6:9, NRSVUV)

Do you ever wonder what would have happened if Andrew had not noticed the youth with the loaves of bread and fish who had come up the mountain that day when Jesus fed that hungry crowd? The Gospel of John notes that 5,000 were gathered, although some suspect it may have been more if the count were only of men, as was quite possible then. In any case, noticing one young person with what amounted to a grocery bag's worth of food in a packed crowd may have been the miracle we miss in this story.



After all, how do you solve the problem of getting food for such a huge group? You look for a lot of food!

You've heard the adage, "Don't sweat the small stuff." Well, it's the little things that often end up making a big difference. Not that we should obsess about every detail to the point that we never complete what we have set out to do. But little things do matter, and they often lead to unimaginable accomplishments and opportunities.

When a new person moves into the house next door, it might be an overwhelming task (for you and for them!) to plan a "Welcome to the Neighborhood" party. But stopping by with a tin of your amazing chocolate chip cookies or a veggie tray, or stopping by to introduce yourself and say, "hi!" might be the beginning of a beautiful new friendship. Or setting aside a few minutes at the beginning of your workday to light a candle and pray before you jump into your schedule might lead to an incredibly focused day. Some small gesture or change in your routine, some act that seems

insignificant in the scheme of things, such as contacting a friend you haven't talked to in a while or cleaning out your closet, may change the trajectory of someone's life, including your own.

In the Southeast Conference, we are working on a lot of "BIG" things; supporting our clergy and resourcing our congregations; fully funding our budget and getting our policies and processes in order; worker justice and economic justice, racial justice and gender justice and LGBTQI justice; disaster response and recovery ministry and new church starts, just to name a few. These and others are necessary and worthy of our energy and attention. They will make us a stronger conference, and they will save lives. But I am discovering that it's the little things that sit with me most; the 10-minute conversation in line at a potluck; the Facebook post from one of our church settings about a successful event; the OCWM gift from a congregation I know is still bouncing back from Covid-19.

The little things in building relationships and being church together really are a big deal! Each small touchpoint, each little step forward, each time we let someone experience that they are valued and loved is part of the big, crowded picture that often blinds our vision. In 2023, as we together as the Southeast Conference make movement in our "big" goals, please don't lose sight of the little things. As Jesus said, "For truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you."

News from the Conference Office

Calling All Members in Discernment

You are invited to a quarterly conversation on Zoom with members of the Preparation for Authorized Ministry Team of the Commission on Ministry. We will gather at two different times for a brief check-in and some conversation.

This is an opportunity for you to meet other people in the MID process and to get to know members of the PAM team outside of meetings and for them to get to know you. The two meetings are on January 31 at 7:30 pm Eastern or February 4 at 10 am. You are invited to join us at one of these meetings (or both if you would like!)

Based on our conversation back in October, we will center our conversation around one of the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers to help in the preparation of your materials. The Mark we will consider is

“Holding the Holy with integrity, especially as represented in the Sacraments.” The question you are invited to consider before our gathering is, “How has COVID-19 and online worship shifted how we hold the Holy or experience the Sacraments in worship?”

- [Register Here](#) to attend on January 31st
- [Register Here](#) to attend on February 4th

Yearbook Reporting

It is that time of year again! Yearbook Reporting! We will be doing things a little differently this year. Church's will not be entering their data directly into the Data Hub. Instead, churches will be receiving an email on Thursday with links to an online questionnaire collecting the standard Data Hub information as well as a link to the supplemental questions. We will also be sending hard copy forms to all the churches that can be returned to the Conference PO Box. Conference staff will be entering all the information this year.

If your church has not received your yearbook instructions, please email Heather at hfosburgh@secucc.org because that means we do not have a current email for the church. We are aiming for 100% reporting this year so it will take all of us to reach that goal. If you would like to get a head start collecting the information we will be asking for, you can [download the collection form here](#).

Calling all Authorized Ministers of the Southeast Conference – We need your Information!

January means it is time to submit your Annual Information Review again. All Authorized Ministers with Standing in the Southeast Conference are required to fill out this form once a year. This helps us to make sure we have current contact information and call information for you on file. This is also how your information is updated in the national records, including Access UCC and the Profiles System. Please take the time to fill yours out today. We need all forms by February 28, 2023 for any updates to be in this year's directory.

SUBMIT YOUR ANNUAL REVIEW FORM

Ecclesiastical Council for Elliot Trojanowski

We hope to see you at Elliot Trojanowski's Ecclesiastical Council This Thursday, January 19 at 7:30pm Eastern. More details and registration can be found here: <https://www.secucc.org/event/ecclesiastical-council-for-elliott-trojanowski/>

Installation of Rev. Merianna Neely Harrelson at Garden of Grace

Announcing the Installation of Rev. Merianna Neely Harrelson's as Pastor of Garden of Grace. This has been a long time coming as Rev. Harrelson began as Pastor in 2019. We are excited to celebrate with Rev. Harrelson and Garden of Grace on Saturday, January 28th, 2023 at 3pm at Garden of Grace. If you are unable to join in person, the service will be streamed on the church's Facebook page.



Prayer List

We are continuing the process of praying for authorized ministers, congregations, and ministry groups throughout 2023. We encourage you to include these prayer requests in your local church newsletter, share them

with your prayer circle, and include them in your own prayers.

Week of January 15

- Shalom Spiritual Center UCC, Snellville, GA
- Larry Evans
- Michael Malcom
- Linda Smith
- Tavye Morgan

Week of January 22

- Pilgrim Congregational UCC; Chattanooga, Tennessee
- Joyce Acree
- Paul Eknes Tucker
- J R Finney II
- Kirk Lyman Barner
- Townley McGiffert Jr.

Pastoral Transitions

- We celebrate with **Rev. Bennie Liggins** and his wife **Gloria** as they celebrate retirement! Rev. Liggins' last Sunday at Unity UCC in Montgomery, AL is January 15, 2023.
- **Rev. Joylynn Graham** is the new pastor at Pleasant Hill Community Church in Pleasant Hill, TN. Rev. Graham's first Sunday is January 22, 2023.

Holding in Prayer

- We mourn with those at First Congregational UCC in Talladega, AL, as **Sister / Deaconess Sadie M. Curry** passed away Wednesday, January 4, 2023. Sister Curry was 89 years old. She was an educator in the Talladega City School System for 41 years. Ms. Curry had been a member of First Congregational since 1966, and was a member of Kings Chapel United Church of Christ prior to that. Sister Curry loved Christ and the UCC.

Churches in Transition

First Congregational, Savannah GA; Trinity Congregational, Athens AL; Holy Trinity Community Church, Nashville TN; First United Church, Belvidere TN; Pleasant Hill Community Church, Pleasant Hill TN; Deer Lodge Congregational Church, Deer Lodge TN; Brookemeade Congregational,

Nashville TN; Rush Memorial, Atlanta GA; Sandy Creek, Lafayette AL; First Congregational Christian, Montgomery AL; Open Table UCC, Mobile AL; Unity UCC, Montgomery, AL

News from the Wider Church



One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) Offering

The theme for the 2023 One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) offering is ***"It's Time to Share,"*** based on Galatians 6:9-10 (*The MSG*):

So let's not allow ourselves to get fatigued doing good. At the right time we will harvest a good crop if we don't give up, or quit. Right now, therefore, every time we get the chance, let us work for the benefit of all...

The apostle Paul wrote these words to the church in Galatia to exhort them to encourage each other and to be generous in caring for others. Through your collective generosity, the United Church of Christ Wider Church Ministries continues to work with both domestic and global partners to care for others: providing food, water, medicines, education, disaster recovery resources and opportunities for sustainable development to individuals and communities in crisis around the world.

Sunday, March 19, 2023, the fourth Sunday of Lent, is the recommended date for the offering. Unlike previous years, OGHS promotional materials will **NOT** be automatically mailed to your churches this year so that you may order only the quantities you need from [UCC Resources](#). If you have not already received a postcard reminding you to place your orders, you will be receiving it soon.

For your newsletters and worship planning purposes, graphics, videos and other resources are already available for download on the [OGHS website](#). Additional resources will be added soon.

Thank you for your enthusiasm in promoting the One Great Hour of Sharing offering in your churches, and for sharing your generous gifts to ensure that *we work for the benefit of all*.

Trainings, Conferences & Events



PATHWAYS
THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Clinical Pastoral Education through PATHWAYS via Sankofa CPE Center

PATHWAYS Theological Education, Inc., announces its first CPE cohort for people:

- who are currently in or pursuing pastoral care vocations
- who want the challenge of working in community settings
- who are not necessarily healthcare oriented.

Offered through Sankofa CPE, our cohort will include those working in urban and rural settings and also those from a variety of educational, religious, economic, and ethnic backgrounds.

This is a fully certified 24-week CPE program, available to participants around the country, combining online group work and supervision with onsite work in a community. The application process is extensive, and our first cohort will be small; applicants do not need to be enrolled in or

possess a Master's degree but must be serious about fulfilling the requirements of the course. The application deadline is January 17 for the course beginning February 13. There is still space!

For more information, please visit <https://www.pathwaystheological.org/.../synthesizing.../cpe/> or click [here](#) and then fill out an inquiry indicating "Sankofa CPE" on the "[Contact Us](#)" page. Our Registrar will be happy to guide you through the next steps, including an interview and a background check if needed.

For more information about PATHWAYS Theological Education, Inc., our courses, and to register, please visit www.pathwaystheological.org. Watch for our new logo coming soon. For more about the Sankofa CPE Center, visit www.sankofacpe.com.

Small-Town and Rural Church National Gathering

The Coalition for UCC Rural Ministries presents *Nourishing the Seeds of Faith*, a virtual national gathering of rural and small-town churches & ministries in the United Church of Christ. Save the dates: February 9-11, 2023. Registration is to open in January 2023. Hosted by faith education, innovation & formation (faith info), a Justice and Local Church Ministry of the UCC. For more information, contact Rev. Roberto Ochoa at ochoar@ucc.org.

PBUCC Offers a Pre-Retirement Planning Seminar

If you are an actively-contributing Pension Boards member, 45 years of age or older, we invite you to join a Pensions Boards' Financial Wellness Seminar themed "Planning for the Transition to Retirement."

Date: Wednesday, January 25, 2023

Time: 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. on EST

Whether you are planning to retire soon or are in the middle of your career, clergy or lay, this seminar is designed to help you transition to retirement.

[Register here by January 24, 2022.](#) Zoom credentials will be available upon registration. In this session, we will discuss the following:

- The retirement planning process and assessing if you are on track
- Social Security planning, including common questions
- Decisions you'll need to make when starting your PBUCC retirement benefits

- Medicare and other insurance considerations
- Investing planning as you approach retirement
- Common estate planning documents
- Planning for a fulfilling life after retirement

We hope you will join us!

“Engaging Christian Contemplative Practices”

Six 90-minute evening sessions on these 2023 dates: January 18, February 1, February 15, March 1, March 15, March 29

<https://sneucc-reg.brtapp.com/ChristianContemplation>

What does “contemplation” mean? When we “contemplate” an idea, contemplation implies something deeper than thinking only. In contemplation, we start from a place of mystery and an acceptance of not knowing. This is often called the “mystical” dimension of faith, which shares a root with the word “mystery”. We shall talk more about the foundations of mystical Christianity over the course of our “Engaging Christian Contemplative Practices” gatherings.

Join Rev. Matt Carriker of the Southern New England Conference bi-weekly on Wednesdays for this program developed in response to the passing of the “Becoming a Church of Contemplatives in Action” Resolution at General Synod in 2021. You may register using the link above. Also, if you would like to stay up-to-date on monthly contemplative practice gatherings (led by rotating UCC faith leaders), or would like to be part of moving the “Contemplatives in Action” Resolution work forward, please email ucc.contemplatives@gmail.com.

2023 Stewardship Webinars

Webinars offered from 6:30 to 7:30 pm Central Time

The UCC Office of Philanthropy is offering several opportunities to develop generosity and stewardship in local churches and ministry settings in 2023. These webinars are free and are great for clergy, lay leaders, and congregations. Be sure to share with your local church leadership!

- Jan. 25 – 3 Best Practices: Set a New Year's Resolution for Increasing Giving
Registration:

- <https://ucc.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwpcuCrqDspH9x8esjlANdtap19-WpfT7s4>
- Mar 22 - Changing Landscape of Giving: What we can learn from Millennial and Gen Z Donors
Registration: <https://ucc.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAlceyorDlqG91XqzR7meOdnSGSOIEbVOVC>
 - Apr 26 – Rethinking What God Calls Volunteers to Do
Registration: <https://ucc.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZModOqtqT4vGNI4Cr7C2c3C0N18Ta97FVp9>
 - May 24 - Building an Endowment
Registration: https://UCC.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYscOCqqDgrGNQ-gPb0Cyrv_MR8m8hWFEzc
 - Jul 26 - Discover Your Why: How a Clear Purpose Strengthens Evangelism, Giving, and Impact
Registration: https://ucc.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMldeCurzwrHdb-aw3gx8dgb9y5DOLA_reu
 - Aug 23 – Narrative Budgets: Telling your Story by the Numbers
Registration: <https://ucc.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYoc-2oqzgJH9zSbpYi1tZtg4lgg0b8c909>
 - Sept. 27 - 5 Ways to Make an Impact: Understanding the Hopes of Our Donors to Create Change
Registration: <https://ucc.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0pc-mqrzwqHNfMjz-tbKacUhHI2uqsSJNl>
 - Oct 25 – Donors Who Don't Come to Church: Engaging Donors Outside of Sunday Morning
Registration: https://ucc.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMtcuytqjlsG9xU9h-_NWtWW0Gk7bMS3wUc

Conference Calendar

January 17 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EST
[Clergy Conversations via Zoom](#)

January 19 @ 1:00 pm - 1:30 pm EST
[Live Harp Meditations for Ministers](#)

January 19 @ 6:00 pm - 7:00 pm EST

[Commission on Ministry Meeting](#)

January 19 @ 7:30 pm - 9:00 pm EST

[Ecclesiastical Council for Elliot Trojanowski](#)

January 24 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EST

[Clergy Conversations via Zoom](#)

January 28 @ 3:00 pm - 5:00 pm EST

[Installation of Rev. Merriana Neely](#)

January 31 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EST

[Clergy Conversations via Zoom](#)

View the full calendar of events online: <https://www.secucc.org/events/>

Contact Us

Conference Minister: **Rev. Kim Wood**; kwood@secucc.org

Assoc. Conf. Minister: **Rev. Heather Fosburgh**; hfosburgh@secucc.org

Generosity Coordinator: **Min. Carrole Moss**; cmoss@secucc.org

Director of Communications: **Don Harris**; dharris@secucc.org

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